Digital Fodder

5 Best PWA WordPress Plugins

Last updated on January 7, 2021

Disclosure: This page contains affiliate links. If you click through and purchase an item, we may earn a commission. See our terms of service for details.

Google focuses mainly on mobile use since most users now access its search engines with mobile devices. Mobile-first indexing means Google will predominantly use the mobile versions of contents for indexing and ranking. Historically, the index primarily used desktop page content to assess the relevance of a page to a user's query. Secondly, Google continues to roll out technologies to enhance mobile user experiences, for example, progressive web apps (PWAs) and accelerated mobile pages (AMP).

A PWA is a web application that uses the latest technologies to deliver a native app-like experience to users. It makes a website look like an app. The native app experience applies to mobile and desktop devices. Standard PWA features include fast loading times, add to home screen prompts, push notifications, and offline accessibility. Those features align with Google's high-level vision for PWAs, including:

- Reliable: the app should load instantly, even in uncertain network conditions.
- Fast: it should respond quickly to user interactions with silky smooth animations and scrolling.
- Engaging: it should feel like a native app on any device and provide an immersive user experience.

Furthermore, Google includes these characteristics:

- Progressive: the app works regardless of browser choice
- Connectivity independent: it doesn’t depend on network availability
- Responsive: it works on any device, including desktop, mobile, tablet, and whatever is next
- Freshness: it’s always up to date
- Safe: it’s secured via HTTPS protocol to prevent the connection from displaying information or altering the contents
- Discoverable: it’s identifiable as an “application” and allows search engines to find and index it
- Linkable: it can be shared easily via URL
- Installable: users can install the app on their home screens without visiting an app store

- App: interaction and navigation behave like a native app
- Reactivable: it’s easy to reactivate thanks to capabilities such as web notifications

PWAs must also fulfill technical requirements regarding HTTPS, web app manifests, service workers, and app icon images.

Do PWAs have disadvantages? If they do, many of them have been debunked. Secondly, Apple supports PWAs, but features are limited to iOS and its browsers. Perhaps that will change soon.

Best PWA WordPress Plugins

For nontechies, creating progressive web apps would be a challenge. Thankfully, there are a few top-rated PWA plugins available on WordPress.org. Some PWA plugins even feature AMP installation, integration, and options. However, AMP is significantly different than PWAs. Therefore, you should only proceed with implementing AMP if you understand it and how it will help achieve your goals. Otherwise, the combination of PWA and AMP could produce undesirable results.

After you install, activate, and enable a PWA plugin, visit your site on a mobile device to evaluate how it looks. You might have to clear your cached images and files to see your updates. Experiment and monitor the plugin for three to six months to assess your results.

If you remove the PWA plugin within a week, no follow up is necessary. If you remove it after a few weeks, review your log and 404 errors for PWA activity. For example, you might see 404 errors containing “superpwa-sw.js”. You may want to redirect PWA 404 errors to your homepage. Speak with your webmaster about best practices.

As with anything, new technologies will work wonders for some users and fall short for others. Therefore, PWAs may not fulfill your expectations. If your site is mobile-friendly and fast, a PWA plugin might only provide minor improvements in those areas. What you should be excited about is enabling users to add your site to their home screens and sending push notifications. If those features don’t interest you, you might want to pass on PWAs altogether.

Let’s explore the best PWA plugins. These plugins are free and premium features and support are available.

Table of Contents [Hide]

Best PWA WordPress Plugins

1. Super Progressive Web Apps by SuperPWA
2. PWA for WP & AMP by Magazine3
3. Progressive WordPress (PWA) by Nico Martin
4. PWA for WordPress by PWA for WordPress Developers Group
5. WP-AppKit by Uncategorized Creations

Related Posts

1. Super Progressive Web Apps by SuperPWA

The Super Progressive Web Apps plugin makes it easy for you to convert your WordPress website into a progressive web app. It's by far the most popular plugin in the category with 100+ reviews, most of which are positive.

- Generate a manifest and add it to the head of your website
- Set the application icon for your PWA
- Set the background color for the splash screen
- Change the browser address bar color for Chrome, Firefox OS, and Opera to match your website colors
- Set the start page for your PWA

- Select the page you want users to see when the page hasn’t been cached, and users are offline
- Set the Accelerated Mobile Pages version of the start page
- Integrate with OneSignal for push notifications
- Do a clean uninstall by removing every database entry and file that the plugin creates

2. PWA for WP & AMP by Magazine3

The PWA for WP & AMP plugin brings the power of PWA to enhance the user experience. Give an app-like experience to your audience to get your website on their home screens.

- Customize splash screen and icons
- Change the start URL
- Use UTM tracking for analytics
- Integrate with OneSignal for push notifications
- Set cache expiry options
- Supports AMPforWP and AMP for WordPress plugins
- Multisite support

3. Progressive WordPress (PWA) by Nico Martin

The Progressive WordPress plugin provides an integrated user experience. It allows you to control the display behavior of your website to mimic a native app.

- Pre-cache all critical assets of your website, as well as all visited resources
- Send push notifications from the WP Admin interface
- Integrate with OneSignal for push notifications
- Supports AMP for WordPress and AMP for WP – Accelerated Mobile Pages plugins

4. PWA for WordPress by PWA for WordPress Developers Group

The PWA for WordPress plugin makes two files for your website, i.e., the "Manifest" and "ServiceWorker." To start the PWA, configure the two files from your configuration screen.

- Customize app images
- Customize popups and buttons
- Fine-tune cache settings, such as expiration date, time, and URLs
- Multisite support

5. WP-AppKit by Uncategorized Creations

The WP-AppKit plugin is a way to offer outstanding mobile experiences to your users. The plugin focuses on creating mobile apps with the option to deploy them as PWAs.

WP-AppKit is more complex to implement compared with other PWA plugins. It requires above-average knowledge of app development and is not a plug and play extension. It provides the tools to build an app rather than merely delivering a PWA for your site. On the other hand, it offers many features for those with specific requirements. WP-AppKit integrates with OneSignal for a fee.